

DESCRIPTION

Infection and inflammation of the lungs causing fluid to collect in the air sacs (alveoli), making it difficult to breathe. Bacterial pneumonia is not usually contagious. It can affect all ages, but is most severe in young children and adults over age 60. Viral pneumonia is the most common type of pneumonia in children and adults and is more contagious.

FREQUENT SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS

Bacterial

- Fever and chills
- Cough with sputum that may contain blood or blood streaks.
- Chest aping that worsens with inhalations.
- Fatigue.
- Loss of appetite and weight loss.
- Shortness of breath
- Rapid breathing.
- Abdominal pain.
- Bluish lips and nails (are rare).

Viral

- Fever, chills and sweating.
- Cough, with or without sputum, or “croup”.
- Sore throat.
- Enlarged lymph glands in the neck.
- Muscle aches and fatigue.
- Rapid, difficult (sometimes) breathing.
- Loss of appetite.

CAUSES

Infection with bacteria, such as *Pneumococci*, *Haemophilus*, *Streptococci* or *Staphylococci*. The germs are usually breathed in, but may be spread in other ways. Infection with viruses, Influenza, RSV, and other nonspecific viral types.

RISK INCREASES WITH

- Age (newborns, infants, and adults over 60).
- Use of anticancer drugs.
- Smoking.
- Chronic diseases.
- Recent surgery.
- Poor general health from any cause.
- Weak immune system due to illness or drugs.
- Hospital care, for any reason.

PREVENTIVE MEASURES

- Obtain prompt medical care for respiratory infections.
- Avoid risk factors where possible.
- Arrange for pneumococcal and influenza vaccines.
- Viral; wash hands often to prevent spread.

EXPECTED OUTCOMES

Bacterial: Usually curable, in otherwise healthy persons, in 1 to 2 weeks with treatment. It may take longer for the very young, elderly, or those with other disorders.

Viral: Usually clears up on its own in 1 to 3 weeks. In more severe cases, recovery may take longer.

POSSIBLE COMPLICATIONS

Bacterial

- Pleurisy and pleural effusion (problems of the membrane layers that cover the lung).
- Spread of infection.
- Bronchiectasis (damaged airways in the lungs).
- Complications, including death, are more likely in older persons who have other respiratory disorders or serious diseases.
- Pulmonary abscess (pus-filled area).

Viral

- Pleurisy.
- Secondary bacterial infection.
- Bronchitis.

GENERAL MEASURES

- Your health care provider will do a physical exam and ask questions about your symptoms. Medical tests may include a sputum culture, laboratory studies, and/or chest x-rays.
- Most patients can be treated at home. Hospital care may be needed for more severe cases.
- Coughing and deep breathing is recommended to help clear secretions. Dispose of tissues carefully.
- Use a heating pad on low heat or warm compresses to relieve chest pain.
- Use a cool-mist ultrasonic humidifier to increase air moisture and loosen lung secretions. Use pure water; don't put additives in the humidifier. Clean the humidifier daily.
- Quit smoking. Find a way to stop that works for you.

MEDICATIONS

- Antibiotics do not cure viral infections but may be prescribed to prevent or treat a suspected bacterial infection.
 - For severe coughing or wheezing, your provider may recommend a prescription cough suppressant and/or an inhaler.
 - Oral steroids may also be prescribed to reduce inflammation.
 - You should begin your steroid prescription today.
 - You should begin your steroid prescription tomorrow.
- ↳ Unless your doctor tells you differently, always finish the full course of your antibiotic and/or steroid prescription, even if you start to feel better.
- ↳ Antibiotics and steroids may interfere with the effectiveness of birth control pills. Use an alternative method of contraception for the remainder of the month after finishing your antibiotic and/or steroid prescription.

Your provider also recommends the following over-the-counter medications. These medications may offer significant symptom relief:

- For fever or pain use acetaminophen or ibuprofen.
(Acetaminophen and ibuprofen may also be alternated every 3 hours for persistent fever or pain.)
- Antihistamine
- Decongestant (Such as Phenylephrine or Pseudoephedrine)
- Mucolytic (Such as Guaifenesin)
- Cough Suppressant (Such as Dextromethorphan)
- Throat Lozenges
- Saline Nasal Spray or Drops
- Decongestant Nasal Spray (Limit use to 3 days)

DIET & ACTIVITY

Increase fluid intake. Extra fluid helps thin the lung secretions so they are easier to cough up. Limit activity until fever, pain and shortness of breath have been gone at least 48 hours. Then normal activity may slowly be resumed.

SEEK MEDICAL ATTENTION IF

- Fever, pain, or shortness of breath increases.
- Blood in the sputum.
- Dark or bluish fingernails, skin or toenails.
- Nausea, vomiting, or diarrhea.